

AMERICAN CLIMATE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2021

Recommendations Report

The 10th annual **American Climate Leadership Summit 2021** brought together a powerfully large and diverse group of leaders to expand American public support and political resolve for climate action. Every session covered **AMBITION, RESTORATION, and JUSTICE**, including practical guidance for action. Join us in bringing the recommendations to life.

At the **National Health + Climate Forum**, panelists and participants discussed health and health equity implications of climate change and how to drive action and advocacy for climate solutions. And the **National Faith + Climate Forum** convened people from across religious traditions and the country to explore the transformative power of faith communities in advancing bold and just climate solutions through local climate action with a national purpose.

Enjoy and share this recap including links to all session videos with current thinking and guidance on accelerating climate action in the US from climate leaders including: **Katharine Hayhoe**, The Nature Conservancy; **Gina McCarthy**, White House; **Michael Regan**, US Environmental Protection Agency; **Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis**, National Newspaper Publishers Association; and **Arthur C. Evans, Jr.**, American Psychological Association.

There is so much that each of us can do. Follow the guidance and join us for climate action, today.



Bob Perkowitz
Founder + President
ecoAmerica



Meighen Speiser
ACLS 2021 Emcee
Executive Director
ecoAmerica



Vanessa Hauc
ACLS 2021 Emcee
News Anchor/Director
Telemundo Network News/
Telemundo News Planeta Tierra



"If we lead on environmental and economic justice and clean up our world by electrifying everything and getting that energy from renewable sources, we will multisolve a myriad of health, jobs, nature, and climate emergencies."

— Bob Perkowitz

*Quotes have been edited for length and clarity.

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Co-Hosts, Partners, Sponsors, + Endorsers

The American Climate Leadership Summit (ACLs) team extends a special thanks to our partners for bringing their expertise and experience forward to develop and shape our time together at the Summit. We are grateful for their intellectual and emotional support to ensure ACLs is inclusive, immersive, engaging, and empowering for all.

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 Trust for America's Health
 Utah Clean Energy
 Waterkeeper Alliance

National Health + Climate Forum Welcome

Climate change is one of the largest threats to our health, but few people understand the connection. We learned about the **health and health equity implications of climate change and how to drive action and advocacy for climate solutions** in America at the National Health + Climate Forum. We heard the latest updates directly from national health leaders. We collaborated with local and national professionals in health and other sectors to develop new strategies to bridge the gaps of inaction and build resolve for solutions in your home, at your workplace, in your community, and with policy makers.

Opening Keynote



Gina McCarthy

National Climate Advisor, The White House

“The climate crisis is an existential crisis. One that threatens our health, our safety and our national security. One that impacts the communities left behind. The Black, Brown and Indigenous and lower income communities that our country has failed to invest in for generations, many who are sitting in the crosshairs of climate risk.... **While climate change is a planetary problem, it’s really all about people.** It’s about us, our families and our communities.”

[▶ Watch Now \(6:34 mins\)](#)



Climate Impacts on Mental Health

The health, economic, political, and environmental implications of climate change affect all of us. The tolls on our mental health are far reaching. They induce stress, depression, and anxiety; strain social and community relationships; and have been linked to increases in aggression, violence, and crime. **Children and communities with few resources to deal with the impacts of climate change are those most affected.** But this also means that equitable climate solutions will bolster our mental and emotional resiliency, as well as build health equity. Speakers in this session discussed various mental health impacts of climate change, and introduced solutions that health professionals and community members can implement.

 [Watch Now \(36:08 mins\)](#)



Arthur C. Evans, Jr, PhD — Moderator
CEO, American Psychological Association

“At the American Psychological Association, we are very committed to **understanding and using psychological science and knowledge to help address climate change and the impacts it is having on individuals.** One way we are doing that is using psychological science to look at how that science can help us understand issues like cognitive biases and how to shape messages so that people are more likely to follow through on policy and other suggestions around how they can affect climate change. Another way we do that is by looking at the impact of climate on mental health.”



Joshua Gordon, MD, PhD
Director, National Institute of Mental Health

“When we think about climate change, we think first and foremost about **the myriad of effects the environment has on an individual's mental health....** Our understanding of the environmental effects on mental health are myriad. It's important to recognize that the environment has both potential risk factors and potential protective factors. And it's the combination of these risk and protective factors that lead to both adverse and positive mental health outcomes.”



Wael Al-Delaimy, MD, PhD
Professor, University of California San Diego

“We need solutions and we can't address mental health specifically without addressing the bigger problem of climate change and its risk factors; we definitely **need better mental health care systems to deal with this mental illness tsunami in the making.**”



Susan E. Pacheco, MD
Professor of Pediatrics, University of Texas McGovern Medical School

“There's very clear evidence that **displacement due to extreme weather events and even air pollution is associated with adverse mental health outcomes....** There are some basic things that can be done at the individual and community level that can make a difference in the life of children.”

Climate Action: Through Policy, With Community



Rep. Lauren Underwood

Representative (D-IL 14th), US House of Representatives

"Today's forum is an urgent reminder that climate change is not just a future danger or an abstract one, it's an **immediate threat that is directly affecting people's lives right now**, including in our own communities in the United States. Climate change is creating new environmental health risks and exacerbating existing ones like our nation's maternal mortality crisis. The role of climate change in fueling adverse maternal and infant health outcomes and disparities is indisputable."

[▶ Watch Now \(4:33 mins\)](#)

Climate Action for Birth Equity



Kelly Davis, MPA

Vice President, Global Birth Equity + Innovation, National Birth Equity Collaborative

"Environments that Black women are in, including exposure to climate change, and other **environmental risks, really affect the health of pregnancy and birth outcomes** generally.... I encourage folks to continue on their anti-racist journey, particularly on climate change."

[▶ Watch Now \(15:25 mins\)](#)

COVID Solutions that Multisolve for Climate



Joshua M. Sharfstein, MD

Vice Dean for Public Health Practice + Community Engagement
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

"One learning from COVID is to make climate relevant to people every day through measurements of air quality, incidents of extreme weather, and human health impacts of climate on agriculture. We have a daily weather report. **Shouldn't we have a daily climate report?**"

[▶ Watch Now \(8:07 mins\)](#)

Climate Justice + Health Equity

Climate change is impacting all of us, but some communities are impacted more than others.

Children, older adults, pregnant women, and Tribal, low-income, and communities of color are some of the most impacted by climate pollution and already experience health disparities. This also means there is tremendous opportunity to address health equity through climate solutions, particularly by centering voices who have been left out of climate solutions and decision-making because of racism, age, income, and educational disparities. Speakers built the connection between climate justice and health equity and review national, state, and local solutions available now.

▶ [Watch Now \(38:32 mins\)](#)



Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH — Moderator

Executive Director, Children’s Environmental Health Network

“Today, all children face environmental hazards that harm their growth and development, but **children from underserved communities always suffer first and worst**. With the continuous threats of climate change, the highest risk children will again suffer the most.”



Gaurab Basu, MD, MPH

Co-Director/Health Equity Fellow, Center for Health Equity Education/Harvard Chan C-CHANGE

“I believe that we have everything we need to create that new future ... the great thing about doing deep, structural work is that you can improve so many things at one time. When we support our Earth, when we stabilize our climate, there’s a cascade of health benefits ... that **unlock the opportunity for a brighter and healthier and more just future.**”



Shasta Gaughen, PhD

Environmental Director/Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, Pala Band of Mission Indians

“With Tribal communities and Indigenous communities, climate change and the effects of climate change on the environment and ways of life cannot be separated from the culture. **Culture and the environment are inseparable.** The people ground who they are, in the places that they come from ... Making it personal to people is one of the best ways to get them to see that something is happening.”



Misbath Daouda, MPH

Climate + Health PhD Candidate, Columbia University Mailman School of Public Health

“If we **center equity from the very beginning, from the outset, defining outcomes at the very beginning** and then ensuring that we measure them all throughout the development of a program or policy, then we are in a much better place to say we are addressing equity issues.”

National Health + Climate Forum Breakout Findings

The following action items emerged from the discussion groups:

Solutions that Multisolve for COVID + Climate

Local Action: Center the voices of the most impacted in community education efforts about the links between air pollution, climate change, and health; build health-promoting infrastructure; and advocate for reductions in local air pollution, which damages our health and our climate and increases susceptibility to other respiratory diseases.

Federal Support: Provide robust funding for things that reduce local pollution (e.g. public transportation) and include **deep collaboration with the community and across agencies**. Provide best practices for climate and COVID preparedness for states, counties, and local communities.

Mental Health + Climate Change: Solution Synergy

Local Action: Host discussions on connections between mental, physical health and environmental degradation and provide mental health services where people are: schools, places of worship, community centers, etc. **“Normalize” conversations about mental health and asking for help.**

Federal Support: Incorporate mental health into disaster response through entities like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); expand the section on mental health in the National Climate Assessment; and **bridge federal, regional, state, and local government efforts.**

Local Health + Climate Action

Local Action: Build health care centers and hospitals that are **resilient and serve as examples of climate-friendly infrastructure**. Dedicate resources to communities where there has been disinvestment.

Federal Support: **Better reporting on local conditions like air quality** (e.g. through partnerships with tech companies), invest in climate-resilient healthcare, and prioritize input from health leaders on environmental policymaking.

Health, Justice + Climate: Making the Connection

Local Action: Fully realize **“nothing about us without us”** through deeper community engagement at all levels of environmental decision-making. There is no climate justice without racial justice; fundamentally address the root causes of persistent inequities and disparities.

Federal Support: **Fund local workforce development in green jobs**, anti-racism training across government, and streamlining the environmental justice resources that are available across government in an accessible way. Fully fund and expand programs like the Department of Energy’s new Energy Equity Office across government.



Rebecca Rehr, MPH — National Health + Climate Forum Host

Director, Climate for Health, ecoAmerica

“We have the opportunity to **act now to build the public health infrastructure that will make these concepts a reality**. The Biden-Harris administration has committed to an all of government approach to climate solutions and environmental justice. But they need our help to chart the course and put some specifics in place.”

National Faith + Climate Forum

This year's National Faith and Climate Forum convened people from across religious traditions and the country to explore the transformative power of faith communities in advancing bold and just climate solutions through local climate action with a national purpose. We heard from powerful speakers including keynote, the Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis, a renowned civil rights and environmental justice leader. **Representatives from faith traditions and supporting organizations shared the ways their faith traditions are motivating people to move from preaching and teaching about climate and faith to activating them toward action and advocacy.**

Afternoon Keynote



The Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis Jr.

President + CEO, National Newspaper Publishers Association

"There is an intersection between climate change, social justice, and environmental justice — this is called climate justice. And we must work toward building a **multi-racial, a multi-lingual climate justice movement**. A grassroots movement for social change. All of the communities where we have churches, synagogues, mosques or communities of faith must be activated and mobilized to address the serious challenges of climate change. Unfortunately, some persons in high positions are in denial that climate change is real, but we can see the changes ... the faith community has to listen to the science and the scientific community must listen to the faith community so we can focus on how to improve quality of life for all of God's people."

[▶ Watch Now \(11:09 mins\)](#)

Social + Environmental Justice Through Local Action: Imani Village



The Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III

Senior Pastor, Trinity United Church of Christ

"You cast a vision. **You live your values of climate change and racial equity**. You sit down with the community because the community knows better than we do. It should never be top down what the community needs, but it should be grassroots up. So you build green, you empower Black, and you give grace to people who need a second chance."

[▶ Watch Now \(12:20 mins\)](#)

Transforming Our Faith Communities on Climate

We don't have to wonder if it's possible to transform our faith communities on climate. Faith leaders in communities around the country have navigated experiences with environmental racism and systemic injustice, the fossil fuel transition, and the partisan divide in order to **transform their congregations and communities from inaction to action on climate change**. In this session we heard from leaders who know there is still work to do, empowering us with their stories to answer our own calls to action.

 [Watch Now \(42:15 mins\)](#)



Taina Diaz-Reyes, MDiv, MA — Moderator

Hunger Advocacy Fellow, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

"These three powerful women are **transforming communities on climate change and rooted in their spiritual teachings**. Hear their stories of navigating uncertainty economic challenges partisanship, environmental racism and systemic injustice in order to move local congregations communities and beyond from inaction to action."



The Rev. Mariama White-Hammond

Chief of Environment, Energy + Open Space, City of Boston

"It's not enough just to ask people to take individual action. It's important that it is part of the solution, but there are barriers for access, on food, on technology. And if we're not fighting for all people to have access, equitable access, then we really won't be doing **God's work of justice**."



The Rev. Dr. Heather McColl

Pastor, Midway Christian Church, Midway, KY

"As the church, we do more damage not having (climate) conversations. Because people are looking at **the Church to be representatives of Christ's love here on Earth**, and the very relationship and connection is part of it. And if we're not becoming that voice for the voiceless, we are doing more damage and, the hypocrisy is that it turns more people away from (the church)."



Kandi White

Native Energy + Climate Campaign Coordinator, Leadership Team, Indigenous Environmental Network

"I use this gift I have to speak to people about how injustices can happen to certain communities and how as Native People, myself being Native American woman, I can rely on my culture and my faith to help strengthen the work that I do to say that damage to the Earth is damage to our souls. **If we don't respect the land, we don't respect ourselves**, therefore we don't respect creation. This is a negative feedback loop that we are in now. My hope is to transform this from a negative to a positive feedback loop."

Faith As Our Motivator: Building Resilience, Pursuing Justice + A Just Transition

As we are called to activate our faith communities to bolder climate action, what do we do right now? We must continue talking about climate change as a moral, justice and faith issue in pulpits, educational programming, and in our communities, but we must do more. Faith traditions are deploying powerful new programs and resources and building networks to achieve climate solutions at the local, state, and federal level. In this session, we heard about these **new and innovative efforts to not only activate those already concerned about climate, but to reach others** and build a broader base for faithful climate action and advocacy.

 [Watch Now \(31:56 mins\)](#)



Rabbi Jennie Rosenn

Founder + CEO, Dayenu

“This past year we’ve faced these intersecting crises ... and all of this is happening against the backdrop of worsening climate. But just as the causes are connected, so are the solutions. And this is where we have been given this opportunity in a very problematic way, but an opportunity nonetheless, to have a just, green recovery to address these interlocking issues together. **This is a once in a generation opportunity to transform our society and our economy**, not to rebuild the same unjust and polluting infrastructure.”



Nana Firman

Senior Ambassador, GreenFaith

“A just transition requires courage — courage to change, courage to create a regenerative economy, courage to promote justice, and courage to live in solidarity and joy among humanity. **No religion sanctions the destruction of the planet but that is exactly what we are doing at the moment.** Our religious and spiritual beliefs compel us to respond. To change everything, it takes everyone. Together, we can make this change and the time to act is now.”



The Rev. Melanie Mullen

Director of Reconciliation, Justice + Creation Care, The Episcopal Church

“Part of our work as Church is to say and lift up that you don’t have to be at a center of power. You don’t have to be rich. But whoever you are wherever you are, with your intent to live in a just world and not leave any of those least able to deal with climate change affects behind, is where we start. In the past year of COVID and crisis, we see the symmetry, the ways **our struggle for climate equality is intersection and woven together.** We understand that now when we hear communities say they can’t breathe.”

Faith As Our Motivator: Expanding Engagement + Climate Action

▶ Watch Now (30:12 mins)



Dekila Chungyalpa

Co-Founder + Director, Loka Initiative

"I'm an environmentalist because I am a Buddhist, and I am a Buddhist because I am an environmentalist. There isn't a division. Everywhere I look at the biological basis of life on Earth and I see a display of interdependence and compassion and impermanence. Buddhism is very much based on this idea that everything is impermanent and so you embrace uncertainty. And that is the philosophy that I understand climate change. And I try to reassure all the communities I work with that we have it in our traditions. **The wisdom is there.** The question is are we looking through that lens to understand what is happening scientifically. If we can bridge that division that is man-made then I do think that we can reverse so much of what is happening."



The Rev. Kyle Meyaard-Schaap

Vice President, Evangelical Environmental Network

"So often many people who are outside of the environmental movement, as many Evangelical Christians are, hear climate action and climate change communicated in a way that sounds a little something like this. 'Here are all of the things about your community or loved ones that are wrong. Here are all of the things you have to change about the life that you love to be right. When you do that you'll be ostracized but don't worry because you'll be more like us. **And then the world will be more like we want it to be.**' Now that's unintentional of course, but in effect that's often what people hear. What we try to do is communicate climate action in a way that sounds more like this. 'Here are all of the things about you and your community that are beautiful and you love. Here are all the people like you that are doing something about climate change.' When you take action, you deepen your connection to these people, and your joy and community and belonging enhance and the world becomes more how you want it to be."

National Faith + Climate Forum Breakout Findings

The following action items emerged from the discussion groups:

Making the Faith + Climate Connection

Local Action: Understand our local context (faiths, economies, habitats) **gather voices across sectors to tell our story**, and ask policymakers and decision makers to do their job.

Federal Support: Funding specialized programs that work in each context (not one size fits all) and **listen to communities to understand their unique needs** and existing infrastructure for funding.

Climate Change, Covid-19 + Just Recovery

Local Action: Get local, frontline communities involved in decisions and solutions. **Preach more about creation care**, include concrete ideas and solutions, and do not be afraid to urge local civic action to support solutions.

Federal Support: Ensure the White House's faith-based initiatives office is empowered to coordinate the voice of the faith community on climate. **Encourage collaboration among agencies** and let local communities direct funding decisions.

Building Resilience Through Faith Communities

Local Action: Focus on getting clergy and lay leaders bought-in through education, advocacy and activism. **Build interdenominational and interfaith partnerships with local community and environmental groups**; lift up youth and young adult voices and support them.

Federal Support: **Advocate for a values-informed approach to social issues such as climate and equity to transcend "politics" and siloing of climate approaches.** Help leaders understand that compassion is the common value for the sacred and secular realms and faith communities are key allies in this work.



Anita Fête Crews — National Faith + Climate Forum Host

Director, Blessed Tomorrow, ecoAmerica

"We can ask ourselves, what is ours to do today? **What can we do more, do better, to pursue climate justice in our own communities in order to strengthen the movement to care for Creation that we're all called into?** And we must invite others to join us. How can we invite and help others partner with the faith sector to do this work, including and especially policymakers, to improve the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we consume."

American Climate Leadership Awards

Time for some great ideas and inspiration! The American Climate Leadership Awards finalists provided you with ideas you can take home and implement. We announced and celebrated the **ten finalists (\$10,000 each), the runner-up (\$25,000), and the winner (\$50,000)** of the 2021 American Climate Leadership Awards, and their successful and replicable efforts to build public support and political will for climate solutions. Click [HERE](#) to view replication guides.

▶ [Watch Now \(20:10 mins\)](#)



***Winner* Tara Houska — Giniw Collective**

“Indigenous peoples are 5% of the global population, holding 80% of the world’s biodiversity. **Building leaders steeped in Indigenous wisdom and centered in land defense is critical**, as is urgent response to an urgent, species-ending issue.”



***Runner Up* Youth Vs. Apocalypse**

“By teaching how climate connects with their lived experiences, and how they can bring their whole selves to collective action, **youth who have never considered themselves ‘into politics’ find a place in this movement.**”



Main Session

Opening Keynotes



Michael Regan

Administrator, US Environmental Protection Agency

“When it comes to fighting climate change and advancing environmental justice ... we need an all hands on deck approach. These aren’t issues that affect any one party or community, they affect us all. At EPA we’re committed to **convening stakeholders where they live, where they work and where they serve....** That’s how we’ll tackle climate change.”

[▶ Watch Now \(1:21 mins\)](#)

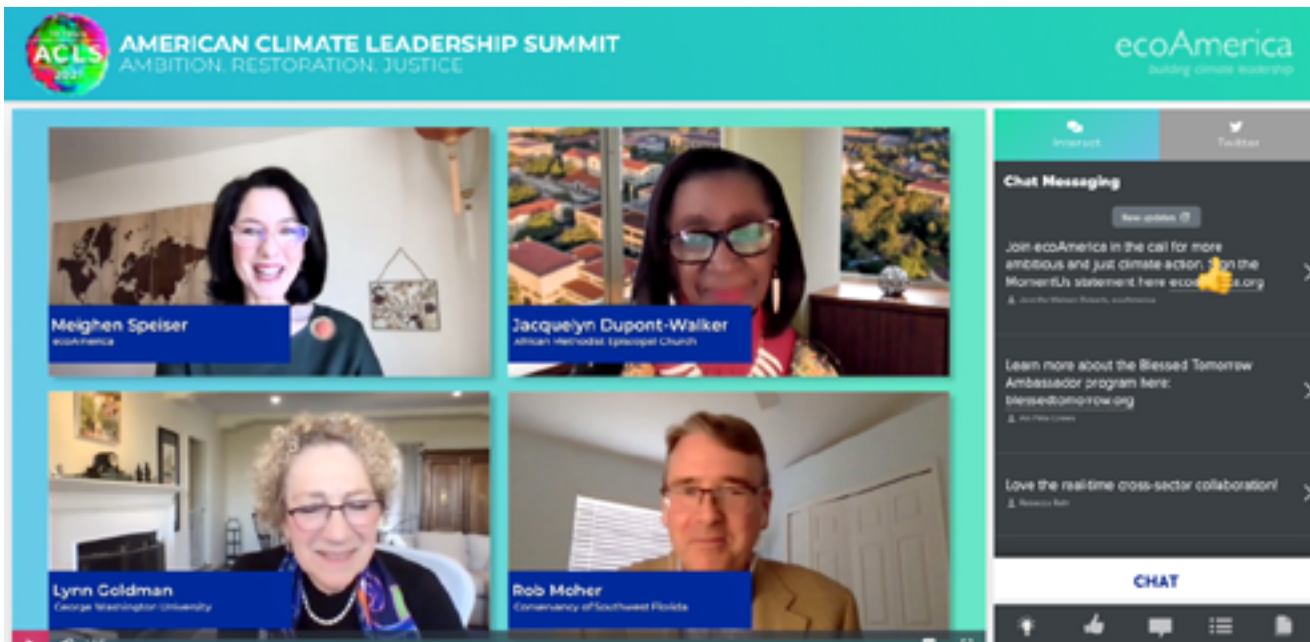


Bob Perkowitz

Founder + President, ecoAmerica

“Thriving nature helps us be mentally and physically healthy. It helps children adjust and get better grades. It gives us clean air and water for free. Nature was in balance. No waste, no pollution. Then we came along and started burning fossil fuels. **We need to reestablish balance with nature in our communities, farms, and our forests.** If we can restore thriving nature, we will restore ourselves and go a long way to solving our climate change problem.”

[▶ Watch Now \(10:33 mins\)](#)



All We Can Save

Is it too late, or can we restore a healthy climate? Are affordable and realistic climate solutions at hand, or is there just too much to do? **America's climate and energy experts** shared the latest information and breakthroughs on the state of our climate, solutions, and the prospects for action in 2021 and beyond.

▶ [Watch Now \(40:04 mins\)](#)



Katharine Hayhoe — Moderator

Chief Scientist, The Nature Conservancy

“In the spheres where we are, women are often typically under-represented. To give you my own example as a scientist, only 19% of full professors in any earth science field are women...The fact is **bringing everyone to the table actually helps every single one of us.**”



Jacqui Patterson

Sr. Director, Environmental + Climate Justice Program, NAACP

“For us it’s **all about intersections, it’s about multi-solving, and dealing with all these things together.** And recognizing that the underpinnings of racism, climate change, and the disproportionate impacts of COVID in our communities are all the same systemic groups that we need to work on in order to solve it all. That’s truly multi-solving.”



Abigail Dillen

President, Earthjustice

“**Recognize that climate solutions happen locally.** They scale up at the international level, but we neglect local government, and you have so much power as a constituent in your city to make the decisions about where your power comes from for example. Believe in your ability to make change. Climate touches every single thing whether you’re in insurance, public health, education. Whatever it is, climate is touching you. By recognizing it you will demonstrate leadership and it will ripple out in your community.”

“I am honored and grateful to have been able to make a contribution to your epic summit, which must have involved endless hours of planning, communication, and coordination. Thank you for pulling it off! There were some very strong speakers and conversations. May all that hard work bear good fruit!”

— ACLS 2021 Participant

Climate + Justice: Justice + Climate

Climate change is a justice issue, but most Americans don't get it. Diverse national leaders shared clear examples highlighting climate as a justice issue, **why it matters to all of us**, and the importance of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in solutions.

 [Watch Now \(50:37 mins\)](#)



Keya Chatterjee — Moderator

Executive Director, US Climate Action Network

"We're right on the cusp to totally change our society from one where it's everyone for themselves, to one where we really take care of each other. Being at the cusp of this opportunity means **it's our moment to make sure whatever changes we make center justice**, because if we don't it's not going to get us to where we need to be."



The Rev. Michael Malcom, MDiv MBA

Founder/Executive Director, The People's Justice Council

"The reason I speak out having the education, having grown beyond my lower middle class status is because **there may be no one left to speak out for me....** My goal is to fight to ensure that we have equity so everybody can experience the same thriving in life."



Tara Houska

Founder, Giniw Collective

"The best thing or at least one of the best things ... is people who are willing to take direct action and willing to actually put their physical selves with the Earth. That's a huge centerpiece of the work I'm doing up here with Giniw Collective, really **standing with our words and taking risks for someone who's not born yet** because that is really, really powerful."



Joe Uehlein

President, Labor Network for Sustainability

"The **impacts on working people are really profound** and I view working people — although not as a geographic community, but as a community of people — who stand to lose a lot if we don't address this challenge of climate change."



Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker

Director, Social Action Commission, African Methodist Episcopal Church

"Send your good thoughts. Thoughts and prayers. I'd like to **ask people to give legs to their prayers**. The historic Black church has been the trusted voice in this country since its very beginning and we don't want that voice to be muted out of a sense of practicality. We need allies."

Cities + Ambitious Climate Action

Clarence E. Anthony, CEO + Executive Director, National League of Cities in conversation with Hon. Jennifer Roberts, Director, Path to Positive Communities, ecoAmerica.

▶ Watch Now (25:37 mins)



Hon. Jennifer Roberts

Director, Path to Positive Communities/58th Mayor of Charlotte, ecoAmerica/
North Carolina

“Our cities and our localities have continued to move forward on climate solutions.... In Utah, we had a Climate and Clean Air Compact pass during the pandemic that had bipartisan support for the whole state of Utah. And so many municipalities there took part.”



Clarence E. Anthony

CEO + Executive Director, National League of Cities

“The bottom line, I think every part of our planning process ... needs to be **grounded in sustainability and long term impact on communities....**This is our opportunity everybody. We have an administration that is committed to sustainability and equity. We cannot let this opportunity pass us by.”



Bringing America Together on Climate

Americans are more concerned about climate change than ever. For the first time, climate has emerged as a **top voting and federal administration priority**. Climate threats and solutions are radically different now. Academic, political, and communications experts shared new strategies ideas on public support for meaningful climate solutions.

▶ [Watch Now \(46:48 mins\)](#)



Bob Perkowitz

Founder + President, ecoAmerica

“Americans are more concerned about climate change than ever. For the first time climate has emerged as a top voting issue and it is a real priority for our federal government. At the same time, we’re a polarized nation.

Climate change ignores all that. It has no political affiliation.”



Hahrie Han

Director/Professor of Political Science, SNF Agora Institute/Johns Hopkins University

“The glue of people-powered social movements, it’s not attention, it’s not money, it’s relationships. The way in which you make the change that you want is by **creating the authentic relationships between people that will transform people so they will begin to transform the world around them.**”



Katie Eder

Executive Director, Future Coalition

“When we talk about issues of racial justice, when we talk about immigration justice, when we talk about gender justice, and when we talk about any of the isms, **we need to remember the root of all these problems is very similar.**”



The Rt. Rev. David Rice

The Diocesan Bishop in the Episcopal Diocese of San Joaquin, CA

“We are looking for partners all over the place because **we acknowledge the immensity of this work before us....** We need to keep one another aware of our ecological crisis and what we can do. We need to keep the conversations going in every chat we have, that’s what pushes the ball up the hill.”

Necessary Ambition: You = 2x2x

With all our plans and commitments, we'll get only halfway to where we need to go — Net Zero by 2050. Tangible solutions are all around — at home, work, in your community and beyond. We need to **increase ambition and action at all levels**. We heard practical guidance and concrete examples of your best options for action now.

[▶ Watch Now \(41:32 mins\)](#)



Diane Regas — Moderator

President + Chief Executive Officer, The Trust for Public Land

"I've been working on climate issues for a couple of decades and I'm feeling so hopeful today that we are on the precipice of a powerful action. **Even with all our plans and all the commitments, we'll only get about halfway to net zero emissions by 2050 ... it's time to level up.**"



Jamie Margolin

Founder, Zero Hour

"What motivates people to take climate action is personal stories.

People are storytelling creatures ... storytelling is who we are.... Actual impacts of how individuals are impacted by the climate crisis. That's what moves people."



Tommy Wells

Director, Department of Energy + Environment, DC Government

"As a lifelong Democrat, practitioner of incrementalism, incrementalism is the enemy. I really do see that incrementalism is what keeps you from getting there in time. **We've got to not accept incrementalism, we've got to do it now.** There are no excuses."



The Rev. Jenny Shultz-Thomas

Senior Pastor, First Plymouth Church, UCC, Denver, CO

"It's not just money, it's about going door to door with your friends, and winning."



A Special Message From Amy Luers

Global Lead for Sustainability Science, Microsoft

"We want to work with you, scientists, governments, and the private sector in order to **build the tools we all need to do this better.**"

[▶ Watch Now \(5:59 mins\)](#)

Hot Topics: COVID + Climate

How we can multisolve for COVID and climate change, and what we can do to ensure this happens in an equitable way.



Georges Benjamin, MD

Executive Director, American Public Health Association

“Climate change is upending our lives, just as we saw with the tragedy of COVID. Our nation needs to come together, we’ve been divided for far too long along this initial activity around climate change.... The health sector plays a big role in trying to address this problem. I encourage you to learn a lot, to **be involved in climate activism**. To educate your friends, educate your family members and of course educate your policy makers.”

[▶ Watch Now \(3:00 mins\)](#)

Hot Topics: Plastics

Plastics are polluting ecosystems and ocean and contribute to climate change. What’s the connection and what do we do?



Dianna Cohen

CEO + Co-Founder, Plastic Pollution Coalition

“**Eight million metric tons of plastic enter the ocean annually**, and large amounts of it are consumed by marine life at all levels of the food chain, and thus potentially consumed by humans.”

[▶ Watch Now \(7:32 mins\)](#)

Hot Topics: Policy

Price on carbon? Federal regulations on buildings, appliances, electric cars and utilities? What are the prospects for policy on climate?



Leah Stokes

Assistant Professor, University of California Santa Barbara

“We need that **clean electricity standard to get us 80% clean by 2030**, and in addition deliver massive pollution reduction. That’s 86% reduction in carbon dioxide, 93% reduction in sulfur dioxide, and 76% reduction in nitrous oxides.... The fact is the health benefits from this policy alone will pay itself back. This is an investment not only in jobs, not only in clean electricity but really in clean air and our health across this country.”

[▶ Watch Now \(9:00 mins\)](#)

Hot Topics: Hyper Local Climate Solutions

Climate change and environmental health issues are profoundly local issues; activating local, trusted voices early in plans to address the public health implications of climate change is a powerful tool in advancing ambitious climate solutions.



David Dyjack, DrPH, CIH

Executive Director, National Environmental Health Association

“Governmental environmental health professionals are employed in all eight uninformed services, all 50 states and most of the US territories. They represent a quietly competent profession. **They are highly educated, modestly compensated public servants.** They possess the knowledge, skills and experience to address some of the most complex climate change issues.... Search them out, get to know them. They are a national treasure and essential asset in our effort to create a vibrant future.”

[▶ Watch Now \(6:00 mins\)](#)

Hot Topics: Conservatives on Climate

Think they don't get it? Think again. Most just have different perspectives and solutions. Come listen and learn.

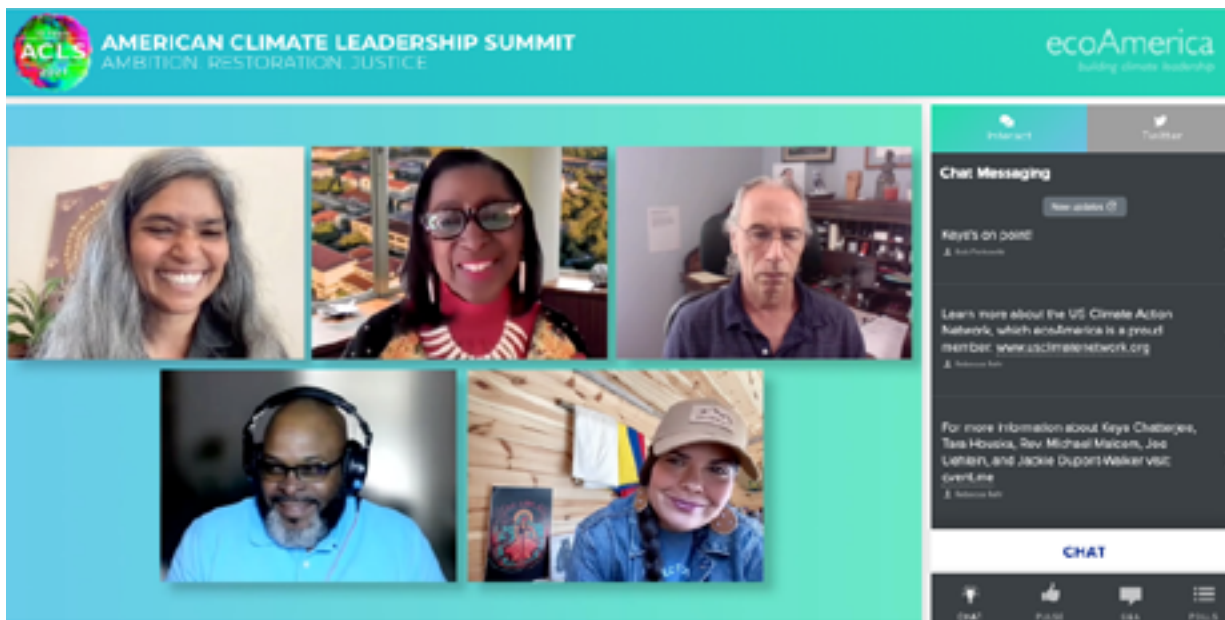


Benji Backer

President + Founder, American Conservation Coalition

“I have three important pillars that are vital to engaging conservatives. The first is making climate change local and tangible. What do people care about, their backyards, they care about their local community.... The second is economics. **We need to make climate change about economics, job creation, American energy independence and competition....** The third way is through optimism. Alarmism and pessimism have not worked for conservatives.... We should be focusing on the optimistic opportunities that exist.”

[▶ Watch Now \(10:26 mins\)](#)



Advocacy + Collective Action: Local Action, National Purpose

Many people think important climate solutions happen only on national and international scales. Not true. Social change happens locally and moves upward throughout society. **We need local action to power state and local policy.** Learn how you can make a difference yourself and multiply your impact by being a visible example and engaging others in your neighborhood, workplace, and community.

▶ [Watch Now \(55:36 mins\)](#)



Meighen Speiser — Moderator
Executive Director, ecoAmerica

“We know that **visible national leadership on climate is critical** and thankfully we have renewed leadership on the national and international stage but we also know the rubber meets the road at the local level and this is where our greatest opportunities lie.”



Jacquelyn Dupont-Walker
Director, Social Action Commission, African Methodist Episcopal Church

“Increasing climate ambition from managing the COVID pandemic and other plagues and isms is the challenge to all countries. Here in the US, one more time, **equity must be our priority.**”



Rob Moher
President + CEO, Conservancy of Southwest Florida

“The reality is if Republican leaders in Florida are looking to the future, they’ve done their polling. They know that young Republicans care a great deal about this issue. The solution suite might look different than a young Democrat club but I think nonetheless at least we’re talking about action. **We’re talking about solutions.** We’re talking about investment and I think what we have to do is start with where we are and then push aggressively forward.”



Lynn R. Goldman, MD, MPH, MS
Michael + Lori Milken Dean of Public Health, Milken Institute School of Public Health, George Washington University

“One of the biggest struggles is moving people from talk to action.... **Conferences like this are incredibly helpful** because there aren’t very many settings where as a health expert I have a chance to spend time with somebody like Jackie from African Methodist Episcopal Church and hearing about her perspective or from somebody like Robert [Conservancy of Southwest Florida] and hearing about his work. And you know frankly I also appreciate the health of turtles and I appreciate it because I don’t want the turtles to be homeless but I don’t want the people in LA to be homeless either.”

Health Surpasses Jobs in Climate Action + Advocacy Support

ecoAmerica's latest survey finds "health" at the top of the list of motivations for climate solutions — ranking even higher than "jobs."

[▶ Watch Now \(8:47 mins\)](#)



Nicole Hill

Marketing Associate, ecoAmerica

"There is widespread agreement that **we have a moral responsibility to create a safe and healthy future**. However, there is still work for climate and health advocates to do."



Jennifer Giordano

Vice President Marketing, ecoAmerica

"ecoAmerica's latest survey, Health Surpasses Jobs in Climate Action Support, finds **'health' at the top of the list of motivations for climate solutions — ranking even higher than 'jobs.'** This is a significant shift. We can use this opportunity to create momentum in our effort for climate action."

Closing Keynote



Hon. Sheldon Whitehouse

US Senator (D-RI), United States Senate

"We have this great opportunity, but in order to really seize it, it's not enough to get the policy right, **we've got to make sure we get the politics right so that we win this battle at the end of the day**. And, that end of the day is, I hope, this year."

[▶ Watch Now \(26:14 mins\)](#)

"This is our moment. We can win the trifecta of a really good climate bill that actually takes us out of danger, that also at the same time increases our economic progressivity and economic fairness, and that also provides the relief that polluted communities have longed for, for so long. We need to do all of it. We can do all of it. This is our moment — let's make it happen."

— Hon. Sheldon Whitehouse

Climate + You Forum: Food, Family, Wellness

Opening Keynote + Remarks

Let's make climate personal. From the moment you wake up in the morning until the moment you fall asleep, there are many ways climate impacts you and your family, and many ways you can be part of the climate solution. Fake meat? Climate anxiety? Active transportation? A cold, dark home? **Fortunately, most things you do to improve you and your families health and wellbeing also help the wellbeing of the planet.** Find out from the experts, make a plan, and multisolve in your life.



Lisa Renstrom

President, Threshold Foundation

"My spirit and my voice is joined with yours — joined with the millions of people, nonprofits and some for-profits who care and who are every day reshaping their relationship with themselves, with others and their relationship with the soil. **So many of us are powerfully moving in the right direction** and so many of us are working hard and from the heart. We are a force against greed and malice, against profits over people, and we are joined in solidarity with each other and with nature."

[▶ Watch Now \(8:20 mins\)](#)



The Rev. Dr. Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

Missioner for Creation Care, Episcopal Diocese of Western MA + Southern New England Conference, United Church of Christ

"**Our own bodies** are after all the first bit of nature entrusted to our care."

[▶ Watch Now \(5:18 mins\)](#)



You + The Planet Taking Care of Each Other

There are many ways climate change impacts you, and many ways to be part of the solution. Fortunately, most things you do to improve **your and your families' health and wellbeing also help the wellbeing of the planet.** Hear from experts in mental, physical, pediatric, and public health on key ways we take care of ourselves and our climate at the same time.

▶ [Watch Now \(47:42 mins\)](#)



Lise Van Susteren, MD — Moderator
Co-Founder, Climate Psychiatry Alliance

“What could be more compelling and give us more meaning in life than taking care of each other, and especially our Mother Earth. Who is the progenitor of all that we do, and who we know wants us to work with her, **not as the masters of the universe, but as collaborators.**”



Sadiya Muqueeth, DrPH, MPH
Director of Community Health, Trust for Public Land

“Nature doesn’t understand the geopolitical boundaries that we place in our land and our spaces.... As we think about these communities **we’re often far more connected than we think....** That we really recognize green space, and parks in particular in this relationship with people as a need to have.”



V. Fan Tait, MD, FAAP
Chief Medical Officer, American Academy of Pediatrics

“As pediatricians we talk about SSNR, safe, secure, and nurturing relationship. The CDC adds an **“E” for environment and what we’re talking about today is ‘environment.’**”



Richard Louv
Author “Last Child in the Woods”

“For a long time the environmental community has been making its case on numbers ... but it doesn’t move people from knowledge to action very often.... When I talk about imaginative hope, what that means is not blind hope ... it’s **the ability to describe the world we want to go to.**”



Theopia Jackson, PhD
President, The Association of Black Psychologists

“What would our communities and decisions look like, where would climate change be if you started from that space. If all interactions, all laws that are passed are first critically asking **‘and how are the children’**, because if we understand the impact on the village, on the people, then we will understand what we need to do to protect the earth because they’re one and the same.”

Nature + Food + You

The connection between nature, food, people, and our climate has often been overlooked and under explored. Not anymore. Hear some of the latest solutions to climate change from experts in agriculture, diet, and food systems, **including practical steps** you can take in your personal life to nourish yourself, your family, and our climate.

▶ [Watch Now \(37:51 mins\)](#)



Vanessa Hauc — Moderator

News Anchor/Director, Telemundo Network News/Telemundo News Planeta Tierra

“We can control what we put on our plates, so we can definitely be part of the solution. **We can be part of the solution if we’re aware of how our diet is affecting our planet.**”



Carol Shattuck

CEO, Food Rescue US

“**We waste between 30-40% of our food from farm to table.** It’s both incredibly inefficient, but when the waste ends up in landfills, which it often does, it creates methane gas, and methane gas is one of the most harmful greenhouse gases contributing to global warming.... People really seem to understand the role that food waste is playing.”



Ryland Engelhart

Co-Founder + Executive Director, Kiss The Ground

“Nature has 500 million years of research and development, it’s a perfect technology for sequestering carbon. We don’t need to re-invent that, we just need to support that. **Nature is our ally.**”



Laura Batcha

Chief Executive Officer/Executive Director, Organic Trade

“Shoppers’ choices alone are not going to solve the enormity of the climate crisis, it’s also going to require bold policy initiatives that couple with the choices that consumers make. We all need to **push for better incentives for organic farming.**”

Hot Topics: Food Waste



Dana Gunders
Executive Director, ReFED

“We like to talk about the Food Waste Five — five things you can do in your own home right now. First, plan ahead. Second, store your food properly. Third, use your freezer!... Fourth, learn about date labels. And, fifth, make sure you **eat down all the food that you have before you shop for more.**”

[Watch Now \(10:19 mins\)](#)

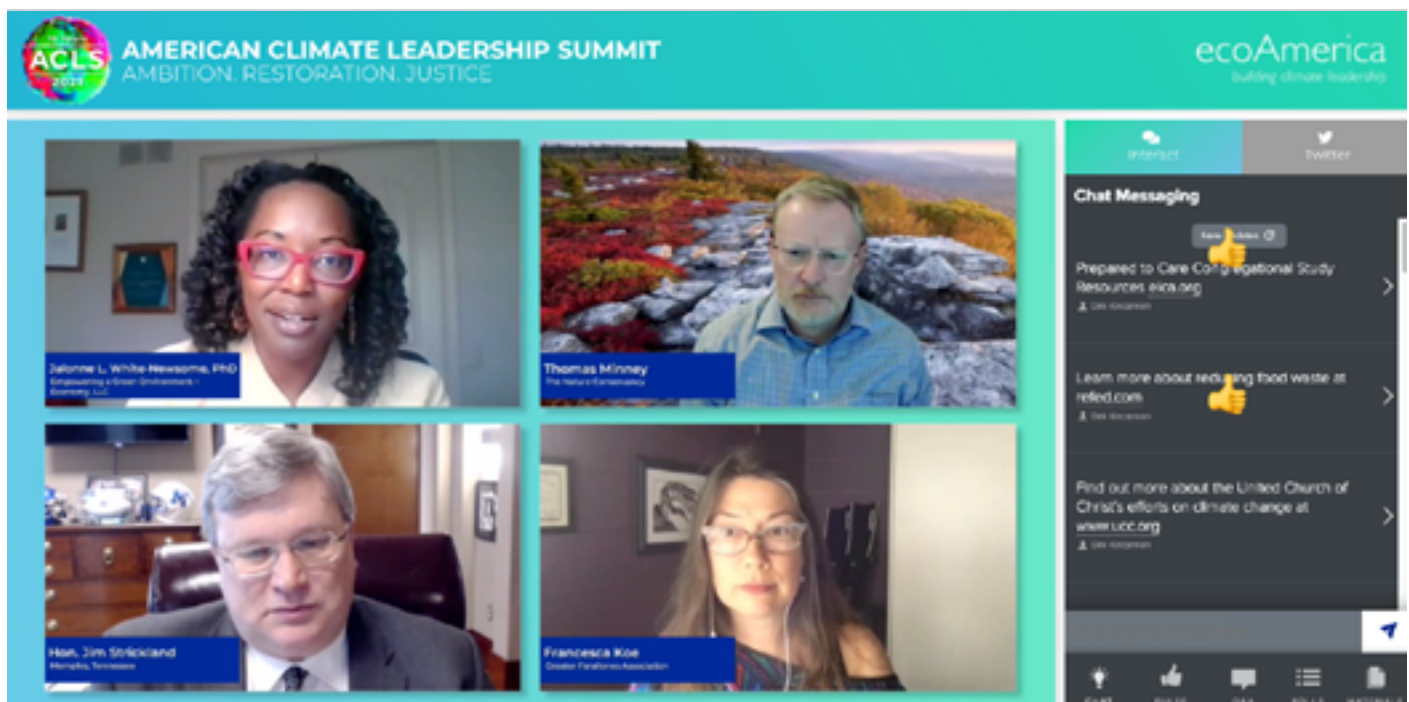
Hot Topics: Active Transportation



Jenn Dice
President + CEO, PeopleForBikes

“Transportation is the largest source of carbon emissions in the United States, making up 28% of overall emissions and most of that comes from passenger vehicles. One simple, low cost solution, is right below our eyes — the bicycle... **One day by bike every week**, and you’re well on your way to showing the world what is possible when people believe in the power of active transportation and the bicycle.”

[Watch Now \(9:40 mins\)](#)



Home + Energy

From the moment you wake up in the morning until the moment you fall asleep, there are many ways **you and your family can be part of the climate solution**, including right in your own home. Find out what you can do to enhance your home and prospects for a healthy climate from experts in clean energy and efficiency.

▶ [Watch Now \(31:25 mins\)](#)



Sarah Finnie Robinson — Moderator

Senior Fellow/Founding Director,
BU Institute for Sustainable Energy/51 Percent Project

“One thing people can do is just **start talking about the changes** that they’re making because it turns out as we’ve heard that so many people don’t realize that everyone else of course is alarmed and concerned about climate change.”



Kiran Bhatraju

Founder + CEO, Arcadia

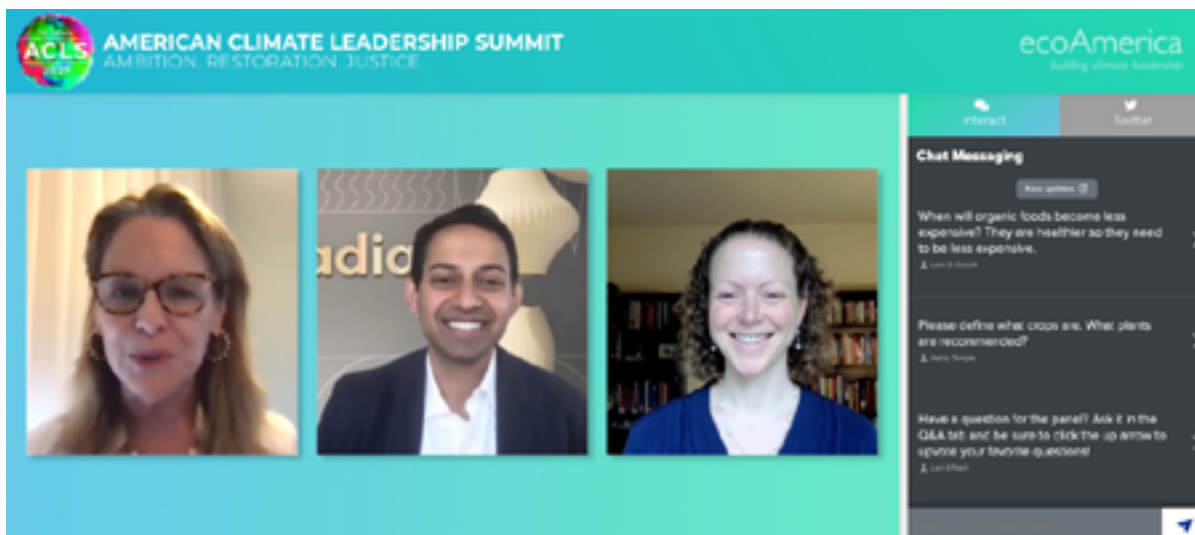
“We’re using technology to make it **easier to make for people to access cheaper, cleaner, fossil free energy**, and make that choice no matter where they live.”



Carolyn Snyder

Director, Climate Protection Partnerships Division,
US Environmental Protection Agency

“You can help prevent climate change and make your energy decisions count. **Decisions you make today will help shape our world for decades** and even centuries to come, and can make a really important contribution in support of a clean energy future.”



Engagement Activities

Low Income Energy Assistance Programs



Ariel Drehobl

Local Policy Manager, Energy Equity, American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy

“A variety of types of programs offered by the government and utilities can help make homes more efficient through weatherization and efficiency. These can help homes **use less energy, have lower bills and be healthier overall.**”

[▶ Watch Now \(10:19\)](#)

A Better Home



Gay Browne

Author/Founder, “Living With a Green Heart”/Greenopia

“Be creative in the way you look at your life and understand that no one has got the rule box for you.... **Trying to live a green life is something that should be fun and enjoyable.**”

[▶ Watch Now \(10:19 mins\)](#)

Our Wild Calling: Our Relationship with Animals in the Time of COVID + Climate Chaos



Richard Louv

Author, “Last Child in the Woods”

“I think we have two habitats. One is the physical habitat that we spend so much time, as we should, trying to **protect and tell our kids about.** The other is the habitat of the heart. We spend very little time protecting it and telling our kids about it. I think that has much to do about climate change and diversity collapse and it has a lot to do with the future of environmentalism.”

[▶ Watch Now \(11:06 mins\)](#)

Exercises for Zoom + Stress Relief



Greg Bianchi

CEO, The City is Our Gym

“Burn, breathe, eat and sleep are four essentials in our life. **Little tweaks and adjustments will make your life bigger, better and brighter.**”

[▶ Watch Now \(10:16 mins\)](#)

Climate Restoration Forum: Thriving Nature + Communities

Restoring Our Communities

All across our nation Americans are coming together to restore nature, their communities, and themselves — overcoming multiple hurdles to **multisolve for health, equity, community cohesion, and our climate**. Hear inspiring stories of transformation from leaders in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

▶ Watch Now (47:24 mins)



Ronda Chapman — Moderator

Equity Director, The Trust for Public Land

“Nature can be a very powerful tool for addressing climate impacts especially while helping to enrich and heal a community, while also **recognizing the importance of history and cultural resistance.**”



Donna Chavis

Founder + Convener/Senior Fossil Fuels Campaigner,
RedTailed Hawk Collective/Friends of the Earth US

“In the Native way, our natural world is not seen as a resource. They are sources of life. When we commodify those sources of life into resources, we’re taking a huge step away from our relationship with the natural world. **It’s important that we see ourselves as a part of the natural world,** and it’s our job to protect it.”



Yomi Noibi, PhD

Executive Director, Environmental Community Action, Inc., ECO-Action (Atlanta)

“We have to create our own support systems, and help communities create their own support system to keep on going on, because we’re not fighting for today, **we’re fighting for the long haul.**”



Veronica Padilla-Campos

Executive Director, Pacoima Beautiful

“**We have to listen to the community** and what they need because there’s so much going on in the community, so many commutative impacts. Any project that you do has to have multiple benefits to address multiple concerns in the neighborhood, it can’t just do one thing.”

Restoring Nature: Why + How

We can make our world, nation, and communities more beautiful, healthy, vibrant, and equitable — and help solve climate change — by restoring nature all around us. Hear the best ideas and practices from community and conservation leaders who are working towards a healthier environment for healthier communities and our climate, and why **restoring nature matters to all of us**.

▶ [Watch Now \(46:18 mins\)](#)



Jalonne L. White-Newsome, PhD — Moderator

CEO/Founder Empowering a Green Environment + Economy, LLC

“What I’d like you to do is think about this past year and how nature has influenced how you’ve managed COVID and other crises. I’ll tell you one thing, I don’t take nature for granted. **Being outside can be healing — it’s free therapy.**”



Thomas Minney

State Director, West Virginia, The Nature Conservancy

“As we look forward we have to keep in mind that nature is very resilient if we take care of it and try to do the restoration work that we have. **What gives me hope is that people are hungry for these conversations.** We can make this future that allows you to have thriving jobs, livelihood, and well-being all at the same time.”



Francesca Koe

Program Chair, Greater Farallones Association

“Just remember everyone you talk to, everything you can do in a positive way will have long lasting effects. **Restoring nature is not just the beauty of wilderness but the beauty of humans.**”



Hon. Jim Strickland

Mayor Memphis, Tennessee

“If we all come together from diverse backgrounds with a common goal, we can make a difference. **Natural infrastructure is a solution that all cities can afford at scale.**”

Summit Closing

▶ Watch Now (10:05 mins)



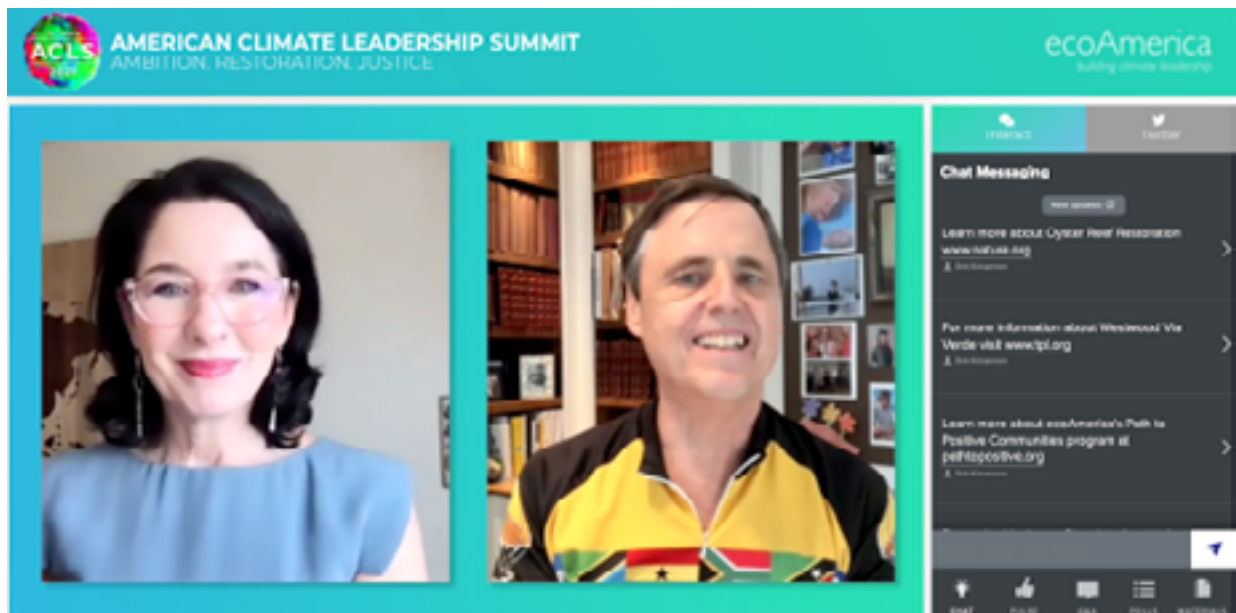
Meighen Speiser
Executive Director, ecoAmerica

"So grateful for all the speakers. The theme of our summit was ambition, restoration and justice. Every session covered those themes. **It's not often you get people who are truly committed to bringing all those three things forward, and our speakers truly did.**"



Bob Perkowitz
Founder + President, ecoAmerica

"People don't remember the science and data. **It's the stories that stick with you.** This summit was filled with some of the best stories and information I've ever heard!"



AMERICAN CLIMATE LEADERSHIP SUMMIT
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